

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 141600Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9174

S E C R E T RABAT 3782

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS

SUBJECT: MOROCCAN MARINE FORCES

REF: (A) STATE 161047 (291520Z JUN 76), (B) CHMUSLO 031300Z MAY 76,
(C) CHMUSLO 011119Z MAR 76, (D) CHMUSLO 071450Z MAY 76,
(E) USCINCEUR 191804Z MAY 76

1. REFTEL C WAS DISPATCHED TO ALERT INTERESTED U.S. OFFICIALS OF GOM NAVY (RMN) INTENTIONS TO PROCURE U.S. EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING. THIS INCLUDED EQUIPMENT FOR TWO BATTALIONS OF MARINES. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT A GOM MARINE BATTALION HAS APPROX. 600 MEN, AS OPPOSED TO THE LARGER U.S. MARINE UNITS. REFTEL B WAS A REQUEST FOR P&A ON CANDIDATE EQUIPMENT FROM WHICH CNO RMN COULD MAKE HIS SELECTION. REFTEL D PROVIDED BACKUP INFORMATION CONCERNING THE MARINE EQUIPMENT AND OTHER SUBJECTS. USCINCEUR ADDRESSED POTENTIAL GAINS FOR THE U.S. NAVY IN REFTEL E.

2. RESPONSES TO THE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS POSED IN PARA 2 OF REFTEL A FOLLOW:

A. THE TWO MARINE BATTALIONS ARE DESIGNED TO BE SMALL, HIGHLY MOBILE, LIGHTLY EQUIPPED COMBAT FORCES. THE PLANNED ORGANIZATION DOES NOT INCLUDE ORGANIC ARMOR OR ARTILLERY, BUT DOES CONTAIN ORGANIC ANTI-TANK DEFENSE WEAPONS. SHOULD MOROCCO BE INVADED, THE MISSION OF THESE UNITS WOULD BE TO SECURE THE BEACH/BRIDGE HEADS BEHIND THE ATTACKING FORCES IN CONCERT WITH A GENERAL COUNTER ATTACK. THE MARINE BATTALIONS WOULD REQUIRE ARMOR AND ARTILLERY SUPPORT FROM ARMY UNITS. LIKewise, AIR SUPPORT WOULD BE REQUIRED FROM THE RMAF.

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THESE HIGHLY MOBILE MARINE BATTALIONS COULD ALSO SERVE A PEACETIME

FUNCTION IN INTERNAL SECURITY.

B. RMN HAS AND CONTINUES TO CONSIDER RELATED MATTERS OF TRAINING, LOGISTICS SUPPORT, ETC. BECAUSE IT IS APPARENTLY EASIER FOR RMN TO OBTAIN ACQUISITION MONEY AS OPPOSED TO OPERATIONS/MAINTENANCE MONEY FOR THESE AREAS, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT A TOTAL PROGRAM PACKAGE BE FORMULATED WHICH WILL ALLOW AN ORDERLY ACQUISITION PROCESS, TO INCLUDE TRAINING AND LOGISTICS SUPPORT. WE ARE CONFIDENT THIS CAN BE DONE. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS AT THIS POINT ARE EXPECTED TO BE MINIMAL WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTIONS OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ANTITANK WEAPON MAINTENANCE. THESE, HOWEVER, COULD BE PROVIDED BY RMA. THE RECRUITMENT OF PERSONNEL FOR THE ROYAL ARMED FORCES IS NOT A PROBLEM.

C. CNO RMN HAS ADVISED EMBASSY THAT HIS MODERNIZATION PROGRAM HAS BEEN APPROVED AND BUDGETED OVER THE NEXT 3-5 YEARS. THE USE OF FMS CREDITS HAS NOT BEEN SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED FOR THE MARINE EQUIPMENT PROJECT, BUT AFTER FY 77 ANY AVAILABLE FMS CREDIT COULD BE PROGRAMMED BY THE GOM, SUBJECT TO USG APPROVAL, FOR THIS PURPOSE.

D. GOM HAS INDICATED THAT IT PLANS TO EXPAND ITS MARINE FORCES TO TWO BATTALIONS (1200 MEN INCLUDING THE HEADQUARTERS) EQUIPPED WITH MODERN WEAPONS. IF USG ELECTS NOT TO PROVIDE THE EQUIPMENT, GOM WILL INEVITABLY SEEK TO PURCHASE IT FROM A THIRD COUNTRY, SUCH AS FRANCE, SPAIN OR THE UK. AS FAR AS POTENTIAL USE IN MIDDLE EAST IS CONCERNED, IT SHOULD BE RECALLED THAT KING HASSAN HAS ASSURED US THAT U.S. SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT WILL NOT BE USED AGAINST U.S. FRIENDS. WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT U.S. EQUIPMENT WAS USED BY MOROCCAN FORCES IN 1973 MID-EAST WAR. USG WILL CERTAINLY HAVE MORE INFLUENCE OVER THE DEPLOYMENT OF THESE TWO UNITS IF THEY ARE EQUIPPED WITH U.S. SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT THAN WITH THAT OF A THIRD COUNTRY. ADDITIONALLY, THESE UNITS WITH U.S. SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT WOULD HAVE ONLY SLIGHT POTENTIAL FOR USE IN THE MIDDLE EAST BECAUSE OF INCOMPATIBILITIES WITH THE TRADITIONALLY SOVIET-ORIENTED SUPPLY SYSTEMS OF SYRIA, IRAQ, EGYPT, ALGERIA, AND LIBYA. IT SHOULD BE RECALLED THAT DURING THE 1973 WAR THE MOROCCAN UNITS SENT TO THE MIDDLE EAST WERE EQUIPPED WITH SOVIET WEAPONS FOR THIS VERY REASON. FURTHERMORE, IN VIEW OF CURRENT TENSIONS WITH ALGERIA STEMMING FROM THE SAHARA PROBLEM, MOROCCO IS UNLIKELY TO WISH TO DIVERT FORCES FROM ITS OWN DEFENSES.

3. TO PLACE ISSUE IN BROADER PERSPECTIVE, IMPORTANT US INTERESTS

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WILL BE PROMOTED BY US PARTICIPATION IN EQUIPPING AND TRAINING OF THIS MODEST MOROCCAN FORCE OF 1200 MEN. THE MOROCCAN ARMED FORCES ARE THE BASIC UNDERPINNING OF THIS PRO-WESTERN REGIME, AS WELL AS THE PROBABLE SOURCE OF AN ALTERNATIVE POWER CENTER IN CASE OF A CHANGE IN THE PRESENT POLITICAL STRUCTURE. WE HAVE BEEN MAKING GOOD PROGRESS IN INCREASING COOPERATION WITH MOROCCAN ARMY AND AIR FORCE. WE HAVE HAD LESS SUCCESS THUS FAR WITH THE PRACTICALLY NONEXISTENT MOROCCAN NAVY, OF WHICH MARINES ARE A

PART. MOROCCAN NAVY HAS NOW, HOWEVER, BEEN ACCORDED A MORE RESPECTABLE SLICE OF THE MILITARY BUDGET AND HAS TURNED TO THE US, PROVIDING AN UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY FOR USG WHICH WE BELIEVE SHOULD BE WELCOMED AS COMPATIBLE WITH AND SUPPORTIVE OF OUR BASIC MILITARY RELATIONSHIP.

4. AT SAME TIME, WE SEE OUR OVERALL MILITARY RELATIONSHIP AS EVOLVING GRADUALLY. WE DO NOT CONTEMPLATE PUSHING FOR IMMEDIATE SPECIFIC GAINS. IN PARTICULAR, WE DO NOT VIEW US PARTICIPATION IN MOROCCAN MARINE PROGRAM AS A MEANS FOR PROMOTING JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS, COMBINED TRAINING EXERCISES, US PRACTICE LANDINGS IN MOROCCO OR OTHER SUCH OPERATIONS. INTER ALIA, WE BELIEVE THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN MOROCCO IS NOT PROPITIOUS FOR RAISING THE US MILITARY PROFILE ALONG SUCH LINES. IN FINAL ANALYSIS USG CAN EXPECT FAR GREATER BENEFITS FROM LOW-KEY APPROACH WORKING TOWARDS A SOUND, LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THREE MOROCCAN AND U.S. SERVICES.

5. DEPT. PLEASE PASS THIS MESSAGE TO SECDEF ISA/DSAA WASHDC, USCINCEUR ECJ4/7 VAIHINGEN GER, CNO OP-63 AND CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG.
ANDERSON

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NNN

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